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Village Board alters ordinance, gives Architectural Control Board discretion on industrial buildings

When the Village of Fredonia created its industrial park, it implemented aesthetic standards to ensure that buildings in the village park would not detract from neighboring properties.

After considerable back-and-forth wrangling, officials agreed on a standard that required buildings in the manufacturing district to use decorative stonework on the equivalent of 50% of the square footage of the largest exterior wall.

Officials said the requirement has resulted in some odd-looking buildings at unnecessary expense, and ultimately led to an ordinance adjustment made at the last Village Board meeting.

The change, which was unanimously approved by the board, gives the Architectural Control Board discretion to determine if the 50% standard makes aesthetic sense.

According to the ordinance change, the board now has the power to require other aesthetic measures, such as planting, in lieu of the proscribed stonework.

“This puts the discretion in the hands of the Architectural Control Board, where it should have been all along,” said Village President Chuck Lapicola.

“There are times I look at buildings where we required masonry walls, and just ask ‘Why?’”

Trustee Don Dohrwardt said there are cases, such as storage buildings, where “the 50% law simply doesn’t make sense.”

Trustee Mark Edbauer Sr. shared that skepticism, especially during the trying economic times most businesses are facing.

“When it comes to a business park, I don’t see why we need to be so strict about how a building looks. I don’t expect a parklike setting. It is a place of business and the important thing is providing jobs,” Edbauer said.

Trustee Fritz Buchholtz took the critique of the 50% masonry requirement even further.

“The purpose of government should be to stay out of our lives,” Buchholtz said.

The ordinance does maintain the prohibition of vinyl and aluminum siding for industrial buildings.

Trustees also approved an ordinance change that gives the village’s zoning administrator — who at this time is Building Inspector John Derler — the authority to approve routine sign

permits.

Previously, even routine approvals needed to come from the Plan Commission.

If questions about sign ordinance compliance come up, the approval will be referred to the commission.

A final ordinance change approved by the board extends exemptions from setback requirements for replacements of existing buildings in residential districts.

The revision allows the owner of a legal, non-conforming home to rebuild on the same “footprint” in the event of structural damage.

A similar change was previously approved for legal, nonconforming accessory buildings.